

# Roper

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## SPEAKERS

Robert Curvin, Richard Roper

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### Richard Roper 00:03

We're now running. Now. The idea is to look more towards the cameras than at me so every once in a while, I'll do like this, okay? We're talking to Richard Roper a very long, dear friend who has been involved in Newark activities for many decades. Richard, why don't we start by saying a little bit about how you got to Newark. The uh, I remember well when I came to Newark as a matter of fact, I arrived here by train from Brunswick, Georgia in September of 1965. In fact, I arrived here on September the 20th 1965. Remember the date because it was my birthday. I had come to Newark, in in preparation to moving to Hackensack New Jersey, where I had an aunt I also had an aunt and uncle here, but I was going to Hackensack because I had been. I had visited this aunt in Hackensack several times over the past several summers and had gotten work in the Hackensack area and anticipated getting work again as I prepared to raise money to return to West Virginia State College where I had completed two years of my undergraduate program but had to drop out of school when the resources disappeared. When I visited with my aunt and uncle in Newark, and told them that I was on my way to Hackensack. They said, "No, you're going to stay here with us and we'll help you find a job." And in fact, that's what happened. I remained with Thelma and uh only(?) James for a couple of years, lived with them and their children and got a job first at Sears as a salesman. And ultimately,

### Robert Curvin 02:09

the Sears in downtown Newark?

### Richard Roper 02:10

The Sears in uh, on Elizabeth avenue in Newark. I worked there for I think it was about two years. At the same time, I decided that instead of going back to West Virginia State, I would attempt to get into Rutgers. I had noted noted Rutgers on my screen as a result of having driven to New Jersey, Christmas or so before that in route to visit the aunt and uncle and

cousins in Newark and noticed that Rutgers on the Raritan also had a campus or a budding campus in Newark. To make a long story short, I decided to apply to Rutgers University College that's the evening division, and was admitted and after taking a couple of courses decided I would apply to the to NCAS and I did and was admitted in 1967. But in 1967, I was I came in as a junior, and I graduated in 1968. So I guess I got here 196-- I got there in 1965 quite frankly, because I spent a year at University College and then Rutgers NCAS Campus. Graduated in 68 with an undergraduate degree in economics. But before I graduated, I had gotten active as a student leader, at the Rutgers Newark campus first elected the president of the last president of the Newark chapter of the NA, Newark campus chapter of the NAACP, and was the leader of the group when we decided that the NAACP was not aggressive enough was not radical enough for the times and decided that we would return the the NAACP chapter to the New York headquarters and we established a new organization on campus called BOS(?), the black organization of students, I served as the first President of that group, and all 25 of us thought we were embarking on a pretty radical new program. I graduated the year before the BOS students took over Rutgers Newark campus. As a matter of fact, when the students took over the campus, I was then working for the Chancellor of higher education, a guy by the name of Ralph Duncan, who had recruited me to help in staffing a newly established program in New Jersey State government and department of higher education call the educational opportunity fund. When a student at Rutgers Newark I had been called upon by Duncan to participate in a series of discussions about the kinds of services that undergraduate students of color would require if the numbers were increased at the colleges of the state. And as a result of those conversations, when I neared graduation time, he called and asked if I'd be interested in working at the department and I said, I sure would, I got a job there making all of \$9,000. I, at the same time, had applied to the Wilson school, before leaving Rutgers, but I applied applied after the deadline, the deadline was November, I applied in April. And I was interviewed by the faculty at Rutgers at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton, and was told that my application was much too late, but they encouraged me to apply to reapply the following year, which I did. So I spent a year working with the Department of Education and then the following year, I started my graduate training at at Princeton at the Woodrow Wilson School.

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Robert Curvin 06:18

Let's go back to 65 when you got to this area, Hackensack, Newark. What were your impressions coming from the South? What were your impressions of how things were? Relationships between whites and blacks? Opportunities in the economy etc? What were your early impressions?

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Richard Roper 06:41

Yeah, Newark in 1965 was in the midst of its decline. I remember the bus ride from Penn Station to South 10th Street, where my aunt and uncle and was notably depressed by what I observed along Central Avenue. The conditions that were unfamiliar to me as a Southerner who experienced wide open spaces and a lot of grass and cultural amenities of a variety of types. Although the South was segregated, the communities in which we live were all the poor were relatively stable and well maintained and the most, for the most part, we did not live in ghettos in Brunswick, Georgia, where I grew up. We lived in small, poor neighborhoods, but those neighborhoods were well maintained. And there was a lot of close personal interaction on the

part of families that comprised a community. What I noted about Newark was the inability of people to look each other in the eye. And the extent to which people on the street were annoyed when you spoke to them unless they knew you. It was an odd cultural change for me. But more striking, I think, was my expectation that the racial divide that exists in the South would not be in place when I got to New Jersey, to Newark and to Hackensack. But I found that there were parts of the city of Newark, in which I was not welcome after 6pm. I remember quite distinctly going to the Weequahic section of Newark and being by car and being stopped by the police and asked what we several of us were doing in the neighborhood, and we were told to get out of the neighborhood. So it was, that was a shock. I think, my first encounter with what I would call overt racial discrimination didn't occur in Brunswick, we knew our place, and we knew what was expected of us and what we could and could not do. When I went to West Virginia State I made friends with some guys from Thailand, and they wanted to one evening play pool and convinced me to go with them into Charleston, West Virginia to a Pool Hall. And I got there and we were then and once we started to play, somebody came over and told us that I had to leave, they could stay but that I had to leave because they didn't allow colors in the pool hall. So I left

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Robert Curvin 09:53

This was in New York?

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Richard Roper 09:54

West Virginia. Anyhow, that was my first real contact with overt racial discrimination, and then my second was here in New Jersey in Newark. And I found that the racial divide was perhaps not as overt as in the south, but it still existed in more subtle forms. And it was also obvious to me that this divide resulted in high concentrations of very poor black people being segregated from the rest of the city the city that had economic help, was the part of the city that was not available was not open to the city's black residents.

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Robert Curvin 10:40

So after you finished in 68, you went to the Wilson School was a two year program, right, from 69 to 71?

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Richard Roper 10:50

That's correct. Right.


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Robert Curvin 10:51


And so in 71, you came back to the city of Newark?

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Richard Roper 10:55

 Richard Roper 10:55


That's correct.

 Robert Curvin 10:56


And then what did you do? That was just after the election of Ken Gibson?

 Richard Roper 11:02

That's correct. You and I met when I was an undergraduate at Rutgers Newark. You taught a course at Rutgers Newark. I don't think I took the course. But we had occasion to have conversation, several conversations

 Robert Curvin 11:16

I think your wife took the course.

 Richard Roper 11:17

That's correct, right, my wife took the course. So we knew each other. When I was at the Wilson School, in my second year, you began your first year of your Ph. D. program in politics department. We talked about what I planned to do when I finished the program. And I had gotten a couple of offers one, to work at Clark College in Atlanta, and another to do something. I can't remember what the second was. But I knew that I was very interested in the Clark Atlanta possibility. But you brought to my attention, the possibility of working in Newark, and I was obviously interested in doing something that could help in the struggle that I thought Newark was engaged in now that it elected a black mayor. And you told me about a new office that was being created the Office of Newark studies, which was housed administratively at Rutgers, but was a think tank policy office, supporting the Mayor of the City of Newark allowing thoughtful analytic types to provide assistance to the new mayor without being a part of the city government bureaucracy. And I was intrigued by it, especially when I learned that the person directing the office had also graduated from the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton, and was thought to be very smart and very progressive. And we hit it off and I ended up coming to Newark (unintelligible) and working as the education policy staff person at the office of Newark studies and was responsible for setting up and managing an educational task force for the city that was intended to bring together the disparate sectors of policy sectors of Newark to focus on improving the delivery of public education services in the city. The task force was headed by a re- another recent arrival to new Jim Scott, pastor of Bethany Baptist Church in New York, and was populated by both city government and community leaders. The task force, ended up recruiting with my assistance of top flight guys, its executive director, fellow by the name of Don Harris, who had prior New Jersey experience having graduated from Rutgers New Brunswick, and who was married and still is married to Kenneth Clark's daughter, Kate Clark, Anyhow, Donald is working for Walter Mondale, who was then in the Senate as his education policy adviser. And we convinced Don that's myself and Ken Gibson, that he should return to the Northeast come to Newark, and help the city of Newark address its education policy problems, and Don did that. After spending a year with the task force, and then telling

the mayor that I was ready to do something else, he offered me the opportunity to co lead his to be the co-chief of staff with a young guy who had graduated from Princeton two years prior and had gone to Cambridge to do his graduate work guy by the name of Dennis Sullivan and and I determined that I didn't want to share responsibility for that, in that roll but rather decided to take a job in Trenton working with the newly appointed Black Director of the Division of Youth and Family Services. The child welfare agency, the state's child welfare agency that had just been consolidated and made the focus of a wide range of services to children and families. I served as Fred Schenk's special Assistant for a year.

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Robert Curvin 15:28

Let me go back to office a nerd setting the time that you were really at the the very early stages of Gibson's 16 year run as mayor of the city, the first elected black mayor of the city, elected black mayor of a major city in the eastern seaboard. As you think back, how do you evaluate those those years? And what do you see as the pluses and the minuses in terms of policy changes or program developments? For the city.

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Richard Roper 16:14

That was a heady period for for Newark's minority residents, both black and Hispanic. It was a heady period for white liberals in the area, quite frankly, the expectations of Ken Gibson for of and for Ken were enormous. It was assumed that the problems that beset the City of Newark would dissipate or if not disappear, with his election to office, that crime in the streets would be eliminated, that jobs would be created to respond to the employment needs of new residents that housing opportunities would be opened up that business development initiatives would be launched. There were a lot of expectations that probably not probably that were in fact, much too substantial to be realized. It became clear that the the nuts and bolts of managing government was enough of a challenge for this new mayor. And to expect him to do more than manage the nuts and bolts of government was probably ill advised. Ken was Ken Gibson was not a philosopher king, he was not a a visionary. He was a guy who identified an issue that needed his attention. He focused his energies on that issue, and did his best to address that issue. If in the process of addressing the issue, he was not successful. He turned away from that issue and decided to focus on something else. He was not a very good manager. He was a very nice guy, a very well intentioned guy. But lacked both the vision and I think the the capacity to address in a serious way, the real challenges that confronted the city. What Ken was able to do, I think reasonably well was to articulate to the broader community the city's urgent needs, especially in the area of social services, health care, and social services. He was less successful in framing an economic development, a vision for the city. That is how do we help Newarkers move beyond their dependence on government for what they need in order to survive? How can we create in Newark a process by which Newark residents can acquire the skills they need to become effective participants in this in the regional economy, not just the city's economy, but the region's economy? How can we create opportunities for minorities to become entrepreneurs and to be producers of wealth and not only dependent on the resources made available? by government, he did a reasonably good job I think of making federal and state government focus in on those social service needs of Newarkers, but did a much less successful job of identifying ways of building on Newark's strengths to advance the economic development needs of the cities' minority communities.

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Robert Curvin 20:31

Also, during that period, though, there was pretty deeply entrenched polarized forces that create a lot of conflict in the city. Some, some would say, in fact, Gibson spent most of his time managing these neighborhood wars between whites and blacks, principally, at one point there was an a, an uprising by Puerto Rican youth that he had to manage. Do you recall some of some of that?

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Richard Roper 21:12

Yeah, I don't I don't recall the details. Much of that happened after I left City Hall. But I do recall that those strains in Community Relations did occupy a goodly amount of his time, he was more successful in speaking to the complaints, the criticisms, the demands of the Hispanic community, I thought than he was in addressing the intransigence of the white community that remained in Newark after the 67 uprising. Largely because I don't think the white community approached city government City Hall in a way that was that was really honest. I think it's much like the way the conservative Republicans approach President Obama today. They were unwilling to accept the fact that Newark's leader, elected leader, was an African American, was Black. The Hispanic community, on the other hand, came with requests for fairness, for access, for entry to opportunities, and I think they were their concerns were legitimate. I think that the response from City Hall by the mayor were responses that were superficial at best, but they served to mitigate the extent to which the Hispanic or Latino community was able to continue its protests. There were some jobs given to Hispanics, to Latinos, a Deputy Mayor position was was made available to a Hispanic, funds were provided to several Hispanic social welfare organizations, one of which La casa de Don Pedro, I'm currently the vice chair of the Board. But yeah, I think Ken was relatively successful in tamping down the criticism of the Hispanic community, not completely, but I think, politically successful. He was less so in terms of dealing with the let- the Italian community in the city.

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Robert Curvin 23:46

Let's fast forward now to Mayor James. I'm struck by the fact that you point out the the absence of a economic strategy under Gibson. A lot of things economically happened though under Sharpe under James, was your strategy there or just was it? How did that? How did how did it happen?

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Richard Roper 24:17

I'm not so sure I agree with you. We can, we can we talk about this a bit more. But as I recall, I served with Gus Henningburg, on the transitional staff for Mayor Sharpe James, and know that as part of-

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Robert Curvin 24:36

After his first election.

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Richard Roper 24:38

When he defeated Ken Gibson I was on the transition staff for the new Black mayor. And I know that during the transition, there was a considerable attention given to the need to develop an economic development focus for the administration. What evolved from that well, it seems to me was rather episodic, not uh coherent was not comprehensive in its in its design or in its implementation. The Newark NEDC the Economic Development Corporation that Sharpe inherited from Ken Gibson, and which was led by a Gibson carryover Al Faiella had as its mission, attracting new business opportunities to the city and promoting the expansion of existing business activity in the city. But there was no coherent strategy associated with achieving those outcomes. Rather, it was as opportunities presented themselves, NEDC would attempt to respond to those requests for either City Hall support, City Hall facilitation of business development. But it did not have a grand design that we want to maximize Newark's healthcare industry and therefore, invite into the city firms that are healthcare related, that might, or we want to attract to the city businesses that are heavily dependent on our infrastructure, transportation infrastructure, there was nothing of that type taking place in the Sharpe James administration. Sharpe was an effective booster of the city. He promoted the city everywhere he went as a good place to do business. But at the same time, he appealed to Washington on behalf of a city that he presented as destitute as in in constant need of public resources in order to get its its job done to successfully provide services to the people of the city who were always at the on the cusp of economic devastation. So there was there was a message that had a double edge to it. This was a sword that had a double edge to it. On one side it was this is a city of opportunity Newark, New Jersey. On the other, this was a city that's almost sinking into into the river onto the Passaic River, if you will, that served, I think, to cause private sector investors to be very antsy about making investments in the city, any substantial investment in city. Till Sharpe left office, I don't think that there were any private investments that did not have at their core a heavy public subsidy. The most successful development initiative during the Sharpe James administration was the construction of the New Jersey Performing Arts Center. And that was near the tail end of his four terms in office. And the reason that was successful is because three governors in succession, were committed to the construction of the Performing Arts Center in the city of Newark, both Republicans and Democrats, were insistent that the project would go forward and that it would go forward in Newark. Sharpe served as a booster of that project, but the governors were the critical piece in making it happen. The governors were able to bring the private sector players to the table to help in the financing of this public private initiative. And Sharpe was clearly a an important piece of that, but I will always be of the opinion that it was Tom Kane and Jim Florio and um, Christy Whi- I think Christy Whitman was in there as well. And McGreevey.

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Robert Curvin 29:25

And McGreevey so four yeah. You make a very interesting point about the the almost contrary messages about development. On one hand, This is a city that is so poor, that it needs extra extra subsidies in order to keep it afloat. On the other hand, this is a city of great opportunity, almost in the way of arguing there's a competitive advantage. In the inner city of four, because land is cheap,

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Richard Roper 30:04

That's correct. That's correct. Willing workers, etc.

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Robert Curvin 30:10

What I don't quite get from your argument is whether you think your view is that Sharpe overplayed the poverty side of the message at the expense of the private investment side?

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Richard Roper 30:29

Yeah.

R

Robert Curvin 30:31

And if he did, is it really possible then to to craft a message that can at the same time address both of those, those goals?

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Richard Roper 30:43

Yeah, a couple of things one is going to be a bit disparaging of Sharpe and another less so I hope. First is that the jobs problem and promoting the city as a good place to invest, was undercut not only by his constant reference to the fact that the city had lacked resources and was in such dire straits, but was also undercut by the quality of the municipal government infrastructure in place that would support a private sector initiative that one might advance into the word got out that it was very difficult to do business in Newark. And once that became the, the mantra, mantra if you will, it was very difficult to interest, major developers in doing coming to Newark to do business. Even at the urgings of organizations like the Economic Development Corporation, it was simply impossible to overcome the bad reputation that City Hall's bureaucracy created over the span of years that that, quite frankly, both Ken and Sharpe presided in City Hall.

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Robert Curvin 32:19

You're not making a distinction between the quality of the of the infrastructure, the city, the city leadership, in that regard.

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Richard Roper 32:28

That's correct. I think I think they both did very little to upgrade the quality of the staff support the intellectual infrastructure of city government, if you will. And I think in part, they did it because they were captives of the organizations of which they were a part, that got them elected, they were very dependent on the foot soldiers and those foot soldiers once the campaign was over had to be, had to be served. And the way they were served was through the provision of patronage jobs, jobs in City Hall, were a function in the main of what you had done to help advance the political agenda of the incumbent mayor. There were some --



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Robert Curvin 33:15

That's true for both of them.

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Richard Roper 33:17

Absolutely. Absolutely. So that was that's disparaging fact. The fact that Sharpe was a was a very consistent booster, did result in some business, some new business initiatives arriving in the city of Newark but they weren't of a scope and scale to have the kind of impact that would result in an appreciable change in economic position of Newark (unintelligible). And as that was happening, there wasn't that concerted effort on the part of city government to force the public school system to respond in a much more thoughtful and constructive way in meeting the needs, the skills development needs of Newark residents. The fights on around education had to do with contracts and who's getting contracts not on how to make the quality of public education in the city much better.

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Robert Curvin 34:30

So, in some, your view is that both Gibson and James, were really not that much less political than what they had inherited from Addonizio in those years.

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Richard Roper 34:50

I think that's right. I frankly, don't think either mayor was as corrupt quite frankly, that is putting money in their pockets and getting money under the table. I think some of that probably happened, but I don't know. But the the people they replaced were were legion for behaving in a manner that that would defy the acceptable if you will.

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Robert Curvin 35:21

Let me go back to make a point about the presence NEDC and Al Faiella. If one were to just write the development story in Newark, aside from who's mayor and whatnot of which is significant, but nevertheless this development track of almost 50 years from the Newark Housing Authority, NEDC, Special assistance in the mayor's office and so on, How do you account for the the continual lack of performance and the perceptions of most people around the city, outside of government, that the development system has always been venal and not really interested in serving the people of the city?

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Richard Roper 36:20

I think, because that has been, in fact, the case. And it has not been about serving the interests of of new residents. It's been about serving the interests of political leaders and business leaders, the extent to which NEDC which was comprised of the city's business elite, focused

almost exclusively on activities that would strengthen the business community's interests, advance the business community's interests, separate and apart from the impact that those decisions those investments would produce, as economically spent in terms of economic spin offs for the rest of the body politic. It was just no concern, no interest, as far as most observers could conte- could tell, in advancing an agenda that was inclusive, that reflected that concern about pulling Newarkers into the economic development equation, either in the form of getting jobs for people, or in terms of creating new business opportunities that minorities might take advantage of simply didn't exist.

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Robert Curvin 37:36

No concern for jobs or for opportunities for the the, the, local minority population. How did it How does a guy like Al Faiella get away with the pretty substantial resources that he walked away with?

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Richard Roper 37:58

You know, that's the question that I have not been able to come to grips with. I just do not know why he was given the authority, the scope, and scale of responsibility that he ultimately acquired as the city's economic development czar, he controlled everything and he ultimately became a deputy mayor responsible for economic development. I don't want to say that either mayor was lazy, or that either mayor lacked the intellectual ability to understand and explore the economic development arena. But it was as if they decided that this guy Al Faiella was the only person they on whom they could rely, to advance whatever vision of economic development they had, it was just embarrassing.

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Robert Curvin 39:12

The idea that as as he ran the economic development program for the city, he also maintained the private law practice. He also served consulting as a private consultant to several other cities, which one might think I think, was a conflict of interest all over the all over the place.

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Richard Roper 39:38

One would think.

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Robert Curvin 39:40

And I reading back some of the articles that were run in the Ledger about his role there. In one case, one of the reporters went to another city and asked if there was anything like this, in this particular city, I think it was in somewhere in Florida. And the person that was being interviewed said, "Are you kidding? That would never happen here. I can't imagine anywhere, anywhere, anywhere in the world, where a guy would be able to, to have such multiple roles, private as well as public and subsequently be subsidized by the city, and then walk away with more than \$30 million, apparently, investment resources."

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Richard Roper 40:33

It's just amazing. It's mind boggling, that that the investments that NEDC, many of the investments that NEDC promoted and brought into being as in the course of Al Faiella's leadership of the agency. He ultimately retained ownership of when he was forced out of NEDC during the latter days of the Sharpe James administration, unbelievable! I don't know how the city Cooperation Council allowed something like that to occur. That he was the owner of these non they these entities that were financed by public resources. But

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Robert Curvin 41:29

But it happened, it happened and nobody has been able to do anything about it. And I I kind of interesting in the Addonizio years, if anything like this happened, people would have been raising hell and people would have been all over it would have been filing lawsuits and so on. But today, there just seems to be an absence of, of oppositional organization in the city too.

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Richard Roper 41:56

It's almost as if we've gotten to the point where they're beat down and tired and tired. Can't get up the energy.

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Robert Curvin 42:04

Or co-opted?

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Richard Roper 42:05

Or perhaps co opted, perhaps co-opted. Correct.

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Robert Curvin 42:09

Let me check this. A couple of other questions. I want to ask you. Oh, we're doing okay. We have we have some good time. Yeah. Let's talk a little bit about our current mayor. And how do you see the vision taking place there and there is a vision I would assume?

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Richard Roper 42:34

Well, let me put it in context. Cory, I met Cory, about three years before he came to New York officially. He was a law student at Yale. And I think he'd been given a statin fellowship. He, as a part of his scouting program, wanted to do something focused on an urban community that is using his skills to address issues in an urban environment. And he came to New Jersey. He came back to New Jersey, having grown up in Bergen County, but he came to New York and he,

I think his first he made first contact with the people at Lowenstein Sandler, who, in the process, give them a list of folks who we should chat by name happened to be on the list and we had breakfast in Maplewood at the village coffeehouse Philips coffee shop. And he talked about his desire to be a social change agent and his attempt to identify an initiative a project on which he can work that would allow him to become better acquainted with the range of issues that urban residents confront on a daily basis and help him think through how those issues might be ameliorated dressed. So I spent a goodly amount of time with him and followed up with conversations with him over the next couple of years until he decided to return to New York and when he returned, he came back to work on a project that the Lowenstein Sandler firm was advancing largely at the end initiative of Alan Lowenstein, the founder of the forum. This was Allen's desire to invest a goodly amount of his accumulated wealth and something that was socially useful in the region ended up being something called the Institute New Jersey City for social justice. And Cory was recruited to prepare a background paper on a range of issues affecting urban mature Originally, but in particular Newark, New Jersey, and that was that document was to be used as a context as a frame for discussion series of discussions that Alan hill at the firm, to which he brought any number of New Jerseyans to help him think through what ultimately became the Institute for Social Justice. Cory became a candidate for city council, I supported him, I wrote letters in support raising money for him. I was very much impressed with this young man who had a very strong educational background and a stated commitment to social change, positive social change, he was successful, was elected to the City Council, followed his career in the city council observed him building his reputation and his his links to new books. Poor infrastructure, it's it's moderate income and low income residents, I observed him in his attempt to address the issue of drug sales and illegal drug sales in the city. And I assume that he would, at one day at one time decide to run for mayor. And when he did, I supported him again, I hosted a fundraiser in my home for him, again, did letters of support for him that I've shared with all my good friends. Although I was a little nervous about queries, about one aspect of his platform, which had to do with public education, and his embrace of vouchers as a way of approaching the problems of urban education, I was nonetheless committed to the view that he was a positive force for change and could be very instrumental in bringing resources to new look and helping New Yorkers think through how to approach the problems that confront the city, in a comprehensive and analytically risk, rigorous way. So I became involved, less so in his first run for mayor. But in his second run, I was invited to participate on his steering committee focused on policy development, not politics, but policy development, helping to frame what became his campaign agenda. And did that for over a year, quite frankly, I was very happy when he was elected mayor. And I expected that, as was the case with Ken Gibson, the expectations would be great. But the performance would probably not meet those expectations. And therefore, my expectations were not as great as many others, I think. But I did anticipate that this would be a positive change for the CEO. And I'm still of the view that that's the case. He has a broader level of professional doesn't to the male office that did not exist before. He has made some improvements in strengthening the electrical infrastructure of city government, but not enough. There are still too many instances in which the performance of staff falls far below what the public expects, and frankly deserves. But he has brought some very bright people to city government. He's given them room to move. He has allowed politics to interfere in some of the work that they've done, but as it has not been overwhelming. And he's done some very good things for New York since he's been in office. I think. Gary McCarthy, the police director, is a excellent leader of the police department. I'm proud of the fact that I was asked to serve on the screening committee that recommended that he be hired as the police director and I follow closely his performance. I think the Deputy Mayor for economic development has got off to a very rocky start, has not been able to achieve much of what I hoped would be it would have been achieved by now. But I recognize that when he began to get a grip on the challenges he confront, confronted and began to develop a

strategy for addressing those challenges. The bottom fell out of the economy, which has made it even more difficult for the economic development and He believes that he has envisioned getting off the ground, I do think there is a strategy, I am convinced that they are right. In fact, I encouraged him to think about building the cities relationship with the port, the Marine port and the Port Authority of New York In New Jersey, because I think there is potential, therefore, job generation job creation that benefits new workers. There's opportunity for new economic investments that will strengthen the city's overall economy. And I think the healthcare industry is another in which the city could make more progress. There, greater attention paid to how to attract firms that are related to the healthcare industry to the city. I have been encouraged, not overwhelming, not bowled over by the performance of the book or administration. But I have been pleased with the successes that have been achieved and hope that there will be more, especially in a job generation area. They've talked a goodly bit about responding to the needs of ex offenders and promoting prisoner reentry initiatives. But they've been unable to get the programs that they put in place to function at a level that has an appreciable, makes an appreciable difference in what ex offenders face confront when they try to enter the mainstream of cities Acharya,

R

Robert Curvin 51:51

sometimes, you know, this dichotomy between New York's on one hand opportunity, if you will, the poverty and the depth of the need is it's such a continuing theme to me. And North life, and particularly even in the, in the in discussing the regeneration and the recovery, so to speak, or what some people call the Renaissance. I'm struck by how much the face of the poor network almost sit side by side with some of the symbols of, of change and recovery. And I, I sometimes I I just wonder, you know, how far can we take this in the long run, given the fact that this rather large proportion of poor people who were not going to go away, and neither should they, but you know, it's an obligation and a responsibility that urban communities have been handed and ours? makeup of our society? Is there? I don't know. I guess I it's hard to think of exactly what the question is. But the bottom line is, how far can we take a recovery?

R

Richard Roper 53:27

Yeah, I think a quarry has fallen into the kind of trip back and I think he has he's a victim of this duality, as well that I referred to earlier having constrained Sharpe, James ambitions for the city. But Cory has Cory Booker has been able to walk this tightrope a bit better, I still think it undermines his overall effort to create the new new world. But he too, makes a compelling case for the city's continued need for transfer payments for government assistance for philanthropy, all of which is true. At the same time, that he's making the case that you want to come to New York and invest your private dollars in a new hotel or a new restaurant or a new factory of some type, all of which suggests that you're coming to a place that's in pretty bad straits, you're risking your your private dollars to promote to do so social good, quite frankly, as opposed to doing something that will provide you with economic returns a profit, quite frankly. And I think he's walking that tightrope. And at some point, I hope he will realize that going into the suburbs and talking about the crime on the streets and drug problems, and the poor quality of the public schools, and the lack of city services, is undermining his effort to attract those same suburbanites as business investors in the city. I'm not suggesting that he shouldn't address the problems of the poor. But there is another dimension to newer that nobody talks about. And that's the aspect of those deaths, the aspect that has to do with that third, if not more of the

population, probably more, who are fully employed, who have homes or are renters in Nuuk who provide the social, the cultural and the economic infrastructure of the city, who, if used as the basis upon which making the case for Newark outside North's borders, you might be able to make a much more successful case, quite frankly, that private investment is in fact, going to be if you come to New York made in a place that has a pretty solid infrastructure of human beings who are just like middle class people in other parts of the world.

R

Robert Curvin 56:39

Let me ask this, because this duality, and the way it's been articulated now by successive mayors, might it also create a situation where any private business who comes to New York has great expectations for very heavy subsidy, very low payback in terms of taxes, generous abatements, etc. So you create, can you? Is it possible that you create a whole dynamic where development has to take place, or it can only take place with extraordinary transfers and subsidies?

R

Richard Roper 57:34

You know, I think that's the trick back end up in order to get the private sector because they expect that they will be they will not be economically rewarded. In the early years of an investment, you have to give them you have to give them excessive subsidies in order to attract them. Right. And in the process, you give away whatever resources community might expect from that private investment in the process.

R

Robert Curvin 58:05

Let me ask you one last question. We have a learning take less than three minutes. I'm interested in hear what you would say to young people today in the future. When they think about their own lives, their own role?

R

Richard Roper 58:33

Well, I guess I'm a bit of an optimistic in this regard. And I would say that America is different. And it's different as of November the 20th 2008. The election of Barack Obama has changed the dynamic in my view, his his election to the presidency of the United States of America, to the highest position in the land and fat in the world, implies that there are no limits to one's aspirations in this society. If one is willing to make the investments required to move up the ladder of success, that even in a new software that challenges are awesome. It's possible to build opportunities for yourself if you're willing to make the investment to secure an education, to focus on being the best at whatever it is. You want to be working hard and making a commitment to being a positive force in in, in whatever you in whatever situation you find yourself. I think that the opportunities are there. I'm that this isn't such an open society that has where the challenges can be awesome. But if those challenges are met squarely, you can do reasonably well if not excessively well.



Robert Curvin 1:00:18

Richard, this is a great point to stop. And I we're gonna do this again. Okay, because I think there's a whole nother we never got to the, to the 21st century. But this has been great, really great. And I'm going to have a DVD made a copy on it.



Richard Roper 1:00:39

You gotta get my arms out of the



1:00:41

way